

**AN EVALUATION OF THE EMS PATIENT TRANSPORT SERVICE FOR
THE CITY OF OVIEDO FIRE RESCUE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The problem identified for research was that since the inception of an EMS patient transport service was secured by the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management approximately one year ago, no evaluation of the new service had yet been performed to determine the successes, failures, or areas for improvement.

The purpose of this applied research project was to evaluate the EMS patient transport service since inception and to determine if the new service was in fact meeting the expectations of both the internal customer (employee), and the external customer (patient), as well as to compare the service to other local fire rescue agencies who were also providing an EMS patient transport service. The research sought answers to the following questions:

1. How did the internal customers (employee) rate the quality of the EMS patient transport service?
2. How did the external customers (patient) rate the quality of the EMS patient transport service?
3. How did the EMS Coordinators of local fire rescue agencies rate the EMS patient transport service?
4. How did the Medical Director rate the quality of the EMS patient transport service?
5. Was the revenue collected from the EMS patient transport service meeting our expectations?

A descriptive research methodology was selected in order to evaluate data collected from several different sources. The internal customers (employee) (Appendix A), external customers (patient) (Appendix B), local fire/rescue EMS coordinators (Appendix C), and the medical director (Appendix D), were surveyed in an effort to evaluate the EMS transport service from different perspectives. Furthermore, financial data (Appendix E), and the citizen complaint process (Appendix F), were also evaluated.

The research results indicated that the survey process was effective in determining the status of the EMS transport service and that the service was rated an overall “excellent” by the internal customers, external customers, as well as the medical director and EMS Coordinators. Furthermore, financial data evaluated determined that revenue collected was above the national average and exceeded the organizations expectations. The use of customer survey cards (Appendix B), proved to be an effective tool in soliciting information from the customer and determining the level of satisfaction.

Recommendations pursuant to this research project determined that surveys of the customer, employees, medical director, and EMS coordinators supported the theory that the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management was performing an “excellent” level of service with the EMS patient transport service and its results have assisted the staff in continuing to manage this field of customer service in a cost effective manner.



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INTRODUCTION

The problem chosen for research was that since acquiring EMS patient transport service, no formal evaluation of the success and/or failures of the program had been performed. This research proved to be helpful in evaluating the new service because management of the Oviedo Fire Rescue & Emergency Management had told elected officials and the citizens of the community that it could provide a better service than the previous provider, a private ambulance company. It became apparent that an evaluation of the service would need to be performed from several different sources. In order to accomplish this task it was decided that the best method would be to survey the internal customer, external customer, EMS coordinators, and the medical director. This method would offer a broad overview of the service, rather than a single perspective.

Fire-Rescue transport vehicles versus private ambulance transport vehicles were also evaluated concerning total number of units available, locations within the county wide system (Appendix G), and average response times (Appendix H). Furthermore, financial data was also compared (Appendix I).

The purpose of the internal customer (employee) surveys was to evaluate the satisfaction of the employees providing the service. The purpose of EMS Coordinators survey was to evaluate the satisfaction of the management staff who coordinate the service. The purpose of the Medical Director survey was to evaluate the overall satisfaction of the director of the medical services, and finally the purpose of the external customer (patient) survey was to determine the satisfaction of the customer who actually receives the service.

The study utilized a descriptive research methodology. The research questions to be answered were:

1. How did the internal customers (employee) rate the quality of the EMS patient transport service?
2. How did the external customers (patient) rate the quality of the EMS patient transport service?
3. How did the EMS Coordinators of local fire rescue agencies rate the EMS patient transport service?
4. How did the Medical Director rate the quality of the EMS patient transport service?
5. Was the revenue collected from the EMS patient transport service meeting our expectations?

It was identified that by evaluating each of these specific areas an overall satisfaction level of the EMS patient transport service could be determined and which adjustments could be made, if deemed necessary. It was apparent that an evaluation of the EMS patient transport service would be helpful in determining future budget requests and possibly the need for expanded EMS services to meet the customer needs. Since the service had been provided for over a full year, enough time had expired to perform a through evaluation of the service. The research provided management with an idea of an overall satisfaction level from several key areas which would greatly assist in future planning.

BACKGROUND and SIGNIFICANCE

The use of surveys is not an unusual concept. In fact, both public and private sectors have utilized this process for inquiring about the overall satisfaction with products and services for many years. Evaluating products and services provided for customers gives companies a competitive edge and is important in the success and often the survival of the corporation. Linda Goldzimer said, "Since you can't talk to every customer yourself, look upon your formal customer survey as an extension of your outreach" (Goldzimer, 1989).

Surveying the internal customer (employee) as well as the external customer (patient) proved to be an effective tool in evaluating the overall satisfaction level from different perspectives. Evaluating the directors such as the EMS Coordinators and the Medical Director also provided a means of determining the satisfaction level of the management officials who coordinate the program.

Since this was a change in the level of service, determining customer satisfaction was of utmost importance. Far too often management develops an unrealistic perception of what the customer perceives the quality of service to be, rather than what it actually is. It is important to develop processes such as customer surveys to better evaluate the service rather than make inaccurate assumptions.

Instilling quality customer service values in employees is also vital to the success of a program. Without internal support the program is headed for failure. Employees within the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management are trained in the importance of providing quality customer service. It is instilled in all members that by providing the very best service possible they are better securing their own future. In the case of providing EMS patient transport service to the community the employees recognized that by losing the ability to provide such a service could mean the future downsizing of the organization if such a service went back to being provided by a private corporation. It was also

recognized that making efforts to provide a high level of quality was important in maintaining the service. Employees have recognized that the importance of providing quality customer service will dictate their own future.

Much competition has occurred across the country with varied results in providing EMS patient transport service from public or private entities. Many fire rescue services are making attempts to secure transport services from previously run private for profit providers. Generating revenue for a fire rescue service is also somewhat of a new direction. Though many services have instilled reimbursement fee schedules for various areas, actually making money on a daily basis for a fire based service is a new venture. It certainly adds a new wrinkle to the equation. The organization is now looked upon as a money generator. This as in the case of the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management has proven to be a real benefit at budget time. It was discovered that acquiring capital budget items has been more successful since beginning a revenue generator for the city.

Although entering into this EMS patient transport service with the sole desire to provide a better level of service to the customer as a goal, Oviedo Fire Rescue has now collected a substantial revenue for the service. What was discovered is that the city manager and elected officials have been very receptive to funding other large scale capital projects. This would otherwise not be entirely possible before becoming a revenue producer. Revenue collected from the EMS patient transport service is deposited to the general fund rather than keeping the funds within the fire department. This is of no concern to the management team as they have recognized the benefits in the overall picture. Within this past year alone the city manager and elected officials have supported the organization by funding the purchase of a new tower apparatus, a new rescue apparatus, a new transport capable engine, and have permitted efforts to begin securing land and revenue for a third fire station. As a result, there are overwhelming benefits to

becoming a revenue contributor to the city government rather than a continual drain on the system.

The problem perceived within the organization was providing a quality EMS patient transport service vs. the former private ambulance provider; however, little research or data had been evaluated to support such a claim. It became apparent that it was appropriate to perform an evaluation of this new service. Was Oviedo Fire Rescue adhering to our mission statement (Appendix J) by providing this new EMS patient transport service with a commitment to excellence and a high degree of integrity in a cost effective and accountable manner? The data collected for this research project in fact supported the claim that the organization was providing a quality EMS patient transport service that was more cost effective and quality orientated than the former private ambulance provider.

The problem of implementing a EMS patient transport service directly related to the Strategic Management of Change course in that to accomplish such a large scale change to a small organization such as our own required the use of the change management model in assurance that the change would occur effectively, accurately, and with accountability. Changing the working conditions of the employees required the use of the change management model in order to achieve success and administer the change accordingly. We discovered during the implementation of an EMS patient transport service that employee participation in the change process was vital to success of the new program. Therefore, personnel within the organization were brought into the proposed program early to participate in planning for and facilitating the change. This tactic proved to be effective in addressing the needs of the internal customers (employee) and moving the change along in the anticipated time frame.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Surveys

An evaluation of various forms of literature supported the claim that performing surveys is an effective tool in evaluating the satisfaction level of both the internal and external customer as well as an effective tool in evaluating the overall satisfaction level of the organization. The process of surveying the customer is beneficial in that it provides a current look at the organization as well as a means for long range planning. Without knowing what the customer thinks of service quality, it would difficult to effect system changes that provide direct improvements for the organization, and most importantly, the customers. Robin Paulsgrove, Assistant Fire Chief of Austin Texas fire department stated: “The organization’s commitment to service should be reinforced through such action groups as quality assurance teams, quality or service circles, focus groups and customer satisfaction tracking systems. Customer perceptions can be gathered through questionnaires, interviews, feedback surveys and focus groups” (Paulsgrove, 1991).

The use of surveys proved effective in evaluating the overall satisfaction of the EMS patient transport service of the external customer (patient), the internal customer (employee), local fire/rescue EMS coordinators as well as the medical director. Without the data collected from each specific area, it would have been impossible to conduct an thorough examination of the EMS patient transport service.

The surveys provided invaluable data supporting the claim that the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management was in fact providing a quality EMS patient transport service vs. that of the former private ambulance company.

Internal Customer

The City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management was already providing EMS with

advanced life support services to the community prior to acquiring the transportation services. In doing so, much of the ground work was already in place. What was required was a process of managing the change to make certain that employee participation and support was part of the service. Without employee support, the program was surely destined for failure. Instilling a positive image within the organization members was part of the original concept and part of the change management model.

Peter Block said, “The difficult part is to move toward the vision in a way that affirms our commitment to be of service, to contribute, and to treat others with a compassion” (Block, 1987). Personnel bought into the new program right from the start because the change management team was successful in instilling the vision, the employees became supportive of the proposed EMS patient transport program and assisted in its development. This was perceived to be the most crucial element of the plan. Without labor’s support of the program it was surely headed for defeat. Mary Jane Dittmar said, “When a new program is forced, rather than eased into, it can cause problems in delivery” (Dittmar, 1993). Nancy Grant and David Hoover said, “All employees desire recognition, the feeling of being valued, and the feeling of being a part of the organization” (Grant, Hoover, 1994). The employees of the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management are an important part of the process. Rewarding employees for a job well done is accomplished by merit evaluations and awards at an annual banquet. This often gives the members something to look forward to and feel more of a part of making the organization a success.

Single Tier System

From the very beginning the management team viewed this new program as a quality issue and not a monetary issue. The revenue that would be collected was perceived as icing on the cake so to speak. Every member truly believed that a single tier system was superior than the two tier system that

had been in place. Katy Benson said, “The patients’ well-being is the most important factor in who provides emergency care, of course. A study used by the Deerfield Beach Fire Department showed patient care improved in a single tiered response system, in which the medics who start prehospital care also transport the patient” (Benson, 1994). The employees of the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management strongly recognized that a better level of service is provided to the patient by a single tier system as indicated in their survey responses (Appendix K) and their own personal comments (Appendix L).

William Kinsey said, “Employee attitudes were supportive and protective of the fire department’s ambulance operation, with the vast majority of employees supporting the fire department as the sole source provider without (turfing) or (farming out) any portion of the service to the private provider” (Kinsey, 1994). This attitude was readily apparent within our organization as well even though many of the employees worked part time for the private ambulance provider on their days off.

Medical Director Support

The medical director who supervised the operations of not only this agency but the surrounding fire rescue agencies also strongly supported the single tier system (Appendix M).

In the medical directors responses he stated service quality had improved by shorter response times, good patient assessment and quality care, better head to toe examinations, improved paramedic skills, and improved accountability. The medical director evaluated performance based quality assurance programs in place such as reviewing of patient run reports and verbal reports and the lack of complaints. Within the county wide system the medical director is responsible for monitoring and amending the EMS protocols as well as assuring quality assurance is in place within each organization.

Ryan Gresham said, “If a department is not willing to allow an EMS physician to come in and do

medical quality assurance, working with them on protocols and training, then I don't think they should be doing EMS" (Gresham, 1994). The medical director for the county wide system schedules annual meetings with each agency to provide for an open floor discussion and regulates the monthly EMS training for all paramedics and EMTs.

Competition

Doug Brown said, "The hope for survival of EMS in the fire service depends on how competitive fire EMS can be against private EMS" (Brown, 1994). It is important to continually evaluate the status of such services in order to remain competitive with private enterprise. This is accomplished by processes such as survey cards. Doug Brown also said,

The challenge to fire service leaders is to factually convey to local politicians and entity managers/administrators that fire operated EMS programs are a better value than private EMS. This does not always mean (cheaper), but it definitely means more cost-effective. Old arguments won't hold water any more (Brown, 1994).

Quality is a key point in this issue. A cost comparison was performed (Appendix I) which evaluated the fees of the private ambulance provider vs. the city as a provider. In this evaluation it was determined that the customer would save only about ten dollars utilizing the city transport vs. the private ambulance provider. This minuscule amount of savings did not effect the outcome of the elected officials awarding the contract to the city fire rescue. Several other key areas that led to an edge in securing the contract were response times (Appendix H) and number of transport units and their locations (Appendix G). It was determined that the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue provided a substantially better response time to the initial call versus the private ambulance provider. Jane Dittmar said, "Fire stations are situated so that response time often is improved; the time difference between the arrival time of the fire engine and the

ambulance in outlying areas can be dramatic” (Dittmar, 1993). This was such the case for the City of Oviedo as well. The private ambulance provider supplied a total of five ALS transport units on a twenty four hour basis for an entire county wide area. This included serving six cities within this area. The closest ALS private ambulance transport unit to the city of Oviedo was sixteen minutes away on an average as indicated in the response times (Appendix H) and private ambulance response districts (Appendix G).

Jerome Hauer said, “In a system of free enterprise, if a fire department can provide prehospital care better than an existing ambulance service, let it do so” (Hauer, 1993). This is what appeared to be the case for the City of Oviedo versus the private provider. The elected officials apparently recognized the same, as the contract was awarded to the city.

Reaching out to the community simply can not be better served than by providing EMS services. This is by far the one area that significantly reaches a substantial amount of the population as is indicated by the number of responses. It is a golden opportunity to network with the customer. Mary Jane Dittmar said, “Where sampled, public sentiment has shown that the public ranks EMS as the most valued public service” (Dittmar, 1993). This further collaborates the theory that EMS is a vital function of the fire rescue service. Mary Jane Dittmar goes on to say, “Providing EMS services seems to be a natural way for fire departments to build rapport with the community residents” (Dittmar, 1993). Competition can be healthy to an organization. Kevin Brame said,

All over the country public services are being challenged by a multitude of concerns and special interest groups. These concerns can create the prime environment in which we can excel, but only if we are willing to rise to the challenge (Brame, 1994).

Local Proposals

The fire chiefs in Seminole County formed an executive branch and created sub groups such as communications, EMS, training, public education, operations, etc. The EMS sub group was empowered to conduct a through study of what is best for the citizens of Seminole County. As a result, they produced a completed evaluation (Appendix N) which recommended a single tier system with the local fire rescue agencies providing EMS patient transport services. They further recommended some consolidation of some services such as purchasing, training, etc.

The EMS coordinators within the county wide system from each agency were surveyed in an effort to determine if they were satisfied with their own EMS patient transport service since implementation. It should be noted that at the time of this research project, many of these agencies had been providing this new service for less than a year as opposed to Oviedo Fire Rescue who has been providing the service for over a year. The data collected from these coordinators (Appendix P) indicated their own agencies had been successful in providing the new EMS patient transport service and the quality was perceived to be excellent.

External Customer

By far the most important element in this EMS patient transport service is the customer. The survey results indicated that the customers rated the new service an overall excellent with a rating of ninety three percent (93%) (Appendix Q, Appendix R). This success can be contributed to the management of the program by the administration, the employees, and the medical director. Management's expectations could not have rated this service with such a high degree of success for the first year. Further review indicated that not a single citizen complaint form had been filed by a customer at the writing of this research project. This solidifies the theory that the EMS patient transport service

has been successful for the first year and has exceeded the organizations expectations.

Revenue

There is no question that administrators would like a piece of the pie when it comes to EMS. In the past, many agencies, Oviedo included, would provide initial care to the patient only to pass the patient off to be transported by a private ambulance provider who would then collect the fee for the total service provided. The potential revenue that could be returned to the city would alleviate future capital expenses such as vehicle replacement, maintenance, and other related items. Though upon entering into this as a quality issue from the start, it quickly became apparent that the department stood to collect a substantial amount of revenue as well (Appendix E). Oviedo has maintained close to a seventy five percent (75%) collection ratio since implementation of the EMS patient transport service. The ambulance industry has an average of sixty percent (60%) collection ratio. It only stands to reason that the fire industry should make attempts to capitalize on these profits in an effort to better the service being provided or expand that service. Success with collections has been attributed to accurate report writing and information gathering from the patient, as well as the billing agency selected (Appendix S). It is important that the proper billing agency be selected if in house billing is not chosen. Researching billing agencies is vital to assuring that customers are treated compassionately when attempting to collect for services rendered.

Literature Review Of EFO Research Projects

A literature review of other EFO research projects on this topic also supported the findings of this paper that it has been a good merger between EMS patient transport and fire service. David Day of the Aurora Fire Department said, “The marriage of most fire department’s sophisticated EMS systems to EMS transport is an easily accomplished goal” (Day, 1994).

William Kinsey of the Bullhead City Fire Department said, “The ambulance service is challenging, exciting, lucrative, and it can provide a revenue base to help diversify the way in which we do business” (Kinsey, 1994). Thomas Montoya of the Castlewood Fire Protection District said, “EMS has been viewed by both management and organized labor as the fiscal salvation of the fire service. The value of providing a cost effective EMS service is readily apparent to the community” (Montoya, 1995). These researchers concluded as a result of their research that a good marriage can exist in a fire service organization that provides EMS patient transport service, and a better quality of care can be provided versus that of the private provider. The service quality is deemed better in many different areas such as response times, costs, training, and employee morale.

Literature Review Summary

The literature review discovered that much support exists for fire rescue service providing EMS patient transport services and in many cases proves to be not only more cost effective for the customer but with better quality service. Furthermore, the process of using surveys to evaluate the internal customer, external customer, and others is an effective tool in collecting data for the management and development of programs. Findings of similar research projects submitted by National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer students lend support in favor of fire based EMS transport services.

PROCEDURES

Surveys were the prime method of conducting research for this project as well as extensive literature review. Surveys were distributed to local EMS coordinators in an effort to evaluate similar agencies attempting to provide or already providing EMS patient transport services. A survey was obtained from the medical director who coordinated the entire EMS system county wide and became a vital part in the determination if fire service based transport was more beneficial to the customer versus the private provider. A survey was also taken from internal customers (employee) in an effort to determine if they perceived the service quality to be excellent as the management team perceived it to be. Finally, a survey of the external customers (patient) was performed by distributing a customer survey card which was self stamped with a return address. This customer survey card allowed the customer to evaluate the service received from several different perspectives and rate the overall service as well. The return on customer survey cards has been outstanding.

The limitations of the survey was that it represented only a small portion of the State of Florida as well as the remainder of the country. Further limitations were that no survey was performed by a private ambulance provider simply because none was in service within the jurisdiction at the time of this research project.

A number of other areas were reviewed such as revenue collected, response times and ambulance locations vs. fire rescue locations, complaint processes, and cost comparison. The limitations to this data was that it was data generated solely by the records generated by the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management and could not be rebutted by the former ambulance provider as they were no longer in operation within the system.

Further review of literature assisted in determining what situations other fire based agencies had

experienced within the EMS patient transport service. Additional literature also assisted in determining that a good marriage can exist with a fire based EMS patient transport service, if managed effectively. A review of similar EFO research projects added support to fire based EMS patient transport services. Limitations was the lack of materials within the LRC from private ambulance providers on the same subject matter.

Additionally, employees were provided the opportunity to add any additional comments for each survey question. This procedure proved to provide some reasoning on why these respondents rated the EMS patient transport service with such a high rating.

RESULTS

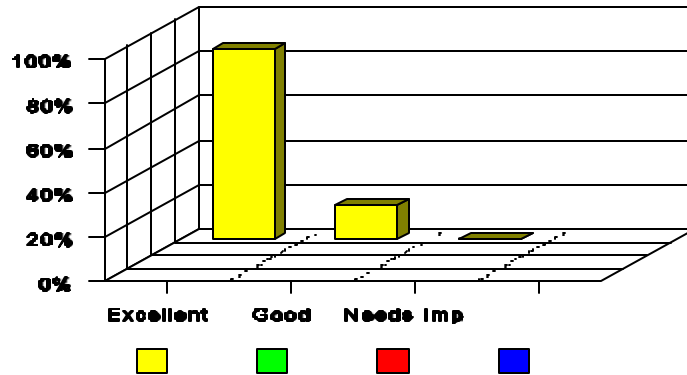
Survey Results Oviedo Fire Rescue Personnel

The internal customers (employee) of the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management were surveyed in an effort to determine employee satisfaction with the EMS patient transport service (Appendix K). In addition to a scoring process, respondents were provided an opportunity to apply additional comments (Appendix L). The following questions were asked:

1) How do you rate the overall service quality of the Fire Rescue EMS patient transport service?

Twenty seven (27) responses were received on this question. Twenty three (23) or eighty five percent (85%) replied the overall service quality was excellent. Four (4) or fifteen percent (15%) replied the overall service quality was good and zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied the overall service quality needs improvement.

Overall Service Quality



Comments:

I believe that the Fire Dept EMS providers receive a higher level of training than providers in the private sector.

I've worked in a few other depts in this county. Oviedo by far is the most professional I've seen yet.

We have highly trained personnel providing patient care.

The transport vehicles could be more patient oriented & made to cater to the ride of the vehicle.

We have a very vast knowledge of all aspects of fire and EMS, therefore providing different levels of care from extrication to final ER delivery.

Even though we charge one of the higher prices, my experience with other departments shows me we give the best service.

Continuity of patient care. Good customer service.

The knowledge and experience we have makes us the best.

Continuity of patient care by competent service related personnel.

Good patient care from well trained staff.

Second rescue needs to be in service as much as possible.

Due to an overall belief that we are a service and to secure our future we need to service our citizens well.

Timely response to EMS calls with excellent patient care provided.

Being a city resident, many people compliment me and the department on services rendered.

Patients no longer have to wait on a transport unit. Transport is now without delay.

Always been first rate.

One primary care giver from patient contact to ER.

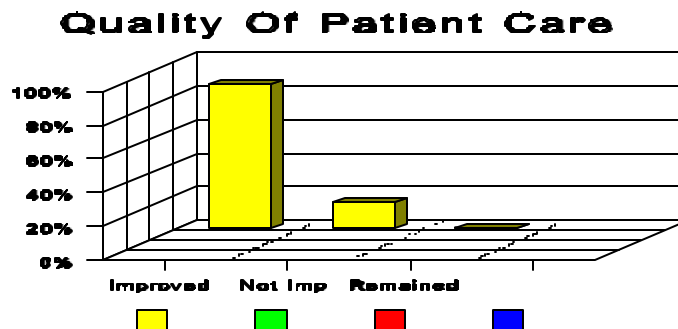
The way it should be. Quality in this case means less. Less meaning, less transfers from one care giver to another.

Employees care about their patients. They strive to produce excellence.

They seemed to be a well motivated group of individuals.
We have some of the finest trained personnel in Central Florida. Quality should only be rated as excellent.

2) **Has the quality of patient care increased or improved?**

Twenty six (26) responses were received on this question. Twenty two (22) or eight five percent (85%) replied the patient care had increased or improved. Four (4) or fifteen percent (15%) replied the patient care had remained the same and zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied the patient care had not increased or improved.



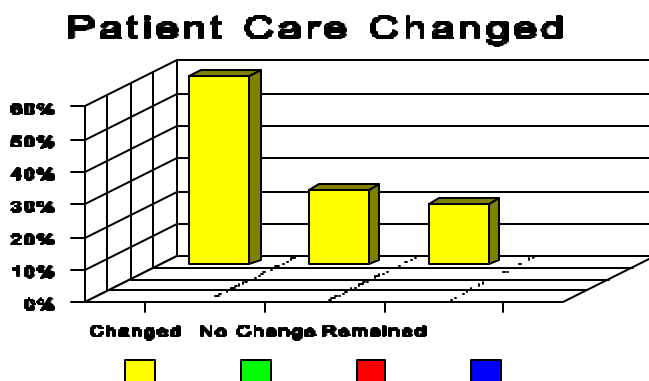
Comments:

One on one. No middle man.
Patient care has improved because a patient arrives at the hospital emergency room sooner then in the past.
Continued education & critiques after critical & sometimes not so critical calls have continued to improve our patient care on every call.
More time with patient.
Quality of people and increased patient contacts with continuous care has improved our service as well as skills.
With more training in house, purchase of new equipment, and more medics on scene.
Yes. Continuity of patient care.
By the EMT's giving going thru paramedic school & the existing medics keeping their skills up.
Patient care by OFD has always been outstanding.
There is no transfer of the patient care.
Medic on scene maintains contact with patient to hospital.

Patient is with the same paramedic the entire time.
 Patient care from beginning until they arrive at the hospital.
 I was not here prior to OFD providing EMS transport, but would speculate that performance has increased with experience.
 Improved thru rapid transport and continuity of care.
 Oviedo maintained the same patient quality of care.
 Less patient information lost!
 Patient care remains with paramedic. No vital information is lost in the transfer.
 Due to single provider.
 Total patient care.
 We have had control of the patient until released to the hospital so the chance for missed problems during an extra exchange of info is reduced.
 There is no more middleman.
 The personnel have more hands on continual care through transport, as interaction with hospital staff.
 Continuously educational.

3) **Has the patient care changed in any fashion by the field personnel?**

Twenty six (26) responses were received on this question. Fifteen (15) or fifty eight percent (58%) replied the patient care had changed by field personnel. Six (6) or twenty three percent (23%) replied patient care had not changed by field personnel and five (5) or nineteen percent (19%) replied patient care had remained the same by field personnel.



Comments:

Decreased times for transport.

On trauma calls some of the patient care is being done en route to emergency room. This makes for better patient care.

There is now less intervention by an outside agency to transport our patients & bedside manners by everyone has also continued to improve.

I think the continuous care transporting patients all the way to the ER has improved overall care for each patient.

More medics to provide quicker ALS support EMT learning and performing better patient assessments.

Yes. Because crews know that they will get to stay with the patient throughout transport & are apt to be more in depth with treatment, assessment, etc.

More aggressive because we treat and transport.

Timing of care is considered more since we now transport. IE: IV en route, medications en route.

There is no transfer of patient care. When you arrive on scene you remain with that patient.

Quicker transport times.

We transport.

I was not here prior to OFD providing EMS transport.

By forcing the initial care taker to improve his or her skills.

I treat a patient just the same, except now I extend my care to the hospital.

Transport times have decreased.

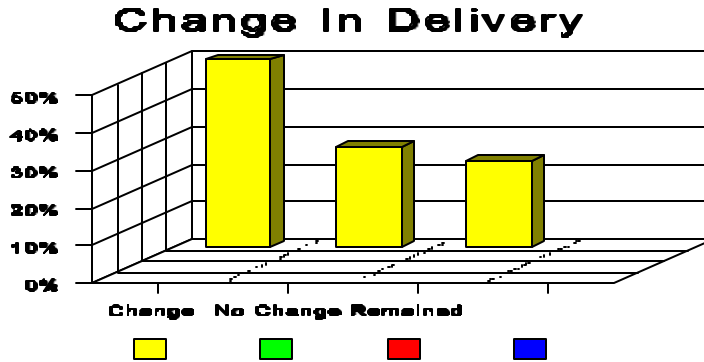
Always outstanding.

Employees tend to be more thorough with assessments. Mainly I believe due to the fact of more time with patients.

As stated above. I have seen the care improve over time from the basic life support to advanced care.

4) Has there been any change in your own delivery of EMS services within the organization as a result of providing patient transportation?

Twenty six (26) responses were received on this question. Thirteen (13) or fifty percent (50%) replied there was a change in their own delivery of EMS services. Seven (7) or twenty seven percent (27%) replied there was no change in their own delivery of EMS services and six (6) or twenty three percent (23%) replied their own delivery of EMS service had remained the same.



Comments:

Yes. Quicker transport of patient.

I've had prior experience with patient transport & I have had a set routine in which I feel has been efficient for my patients & myself.

Able to perform a better patient assessment.

Remaining with the patient affords us better opportunity to build a rapport with the patient and our skills follow through with our care and continue improving.

Yes. With us transporting there is no break in care. The patient builds a rapport with the care giver.

Able to provide more for the patient & family in the way of customer service with the patient much longer.

More aggressive.

We are more likely to place patients in our unit for care since we transport. IE: Violent situations, inclement weather, etc.

I believe it is better quality because of the more dedication.

Look to transport patients as soon as possible.

Responsibility for patient care has been extended, accountability to the ER staff is now my responsibility.

I was not here prior to OFD providing EMS transport.

OFD has always provided a high level of service.

Regardless of transport, patient care should always be top priority.

More patient contact!

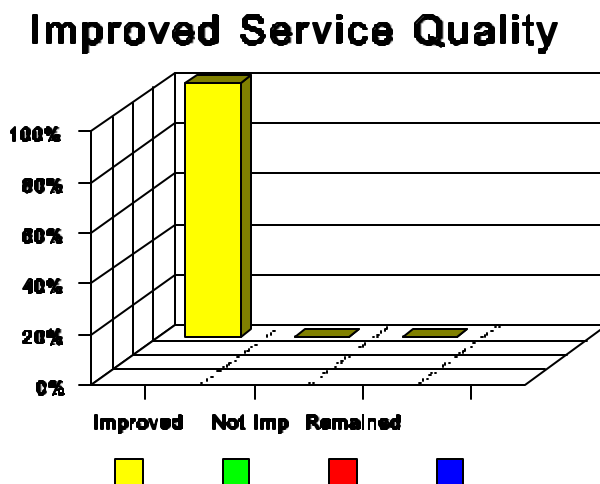
See above.

I now worry more about lawsuits etc. This tends to make me more thorough and exact with patient care.

I have experienced in transport prior to our inception. I try to give the same care whether transporting or not.

5) Has the inception of the Fire Rescue EMS patient transport improved the overall service quality to customers versus the private ambulance provider?

Twenty five (25) responses were received on this question. Twenty five (25) or one hundred percent (100%) replied the overall service quality to customers had improved vs. the private ambulance provider. Zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied it had not improved the service quality to customers vs. the private ambulance provider and zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied it had remained the same.



Comments:

Better patient care. Service quality better with not passing off patient & conflicts of care. Same EMS provider stays with the patient. There is no more transfer to private ambulance. This makes for better patient care.

Patients do not have to worry about gaining trust every time someone new arrives at their house. In this small city most of the citizens we run on we know on a first name basis & vice versa. Patient trust is pretty much already taken care of before we ever arrive.

Continuous care without transfer.

Continuous care, rapid transport, more of a personal service to each & every patient. Able to continue care without transfer thereby not transferring false or misunderstood patient information between care givers.

Yes. The private company cuts corners for more profit.

Continuity of patient care from time of alarm to delivering patient to a receiving facility.

Yes. We treat the patient from the beginning to end and never miss a beat. The patient

never waits for a transport unit.

The lack of control of patient care with a third party is no longer an issue. The same high level of service is continued through to the ER.

The public has a better faith in the fire service.

Continued care given thru to the hospital.

We provide a better level of service, more professional.

Less response times for transport unit. Most personnel realize that the patient is paying for our salary (IE: taxes).

I have been told numerous times by citizens that they are very satisfied with our service and pleased to see us transporting.

Not employed prior to transport.

Fire dept is first to respond therefore patient care has speeded up.

Turn over time and less time on scene.

The initial care giver has primary control of treatment & transport. Patient doesn't feel like there being handed off.

I believe a patient would rather stay with a single care giver instead of being transferred.

Overall service level.

Without not working with a private ambulance I don't know how the patient care was. I don't know how their employees felt towards their patients.

See above.

There is one less link in the chain. I assess, treat and transport and report findings to hospital staff 1st hand.

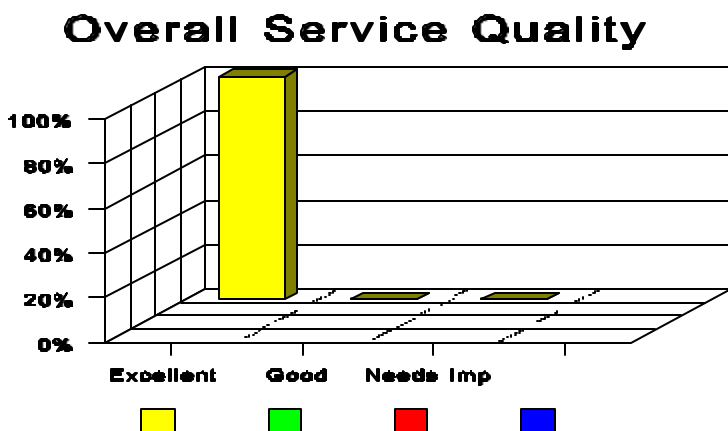
Survey Results EMS Coordinators

The EMS Coordinators of surrounding Fire Rescue agencies whom operated within the same EMS protocols were surveyed in an effort to determine their satisfaction with the EMS patient transport service (Appendix O). In addition to a scoring process, respondents were provided an opportunity to apply additional comments (Appendix P). The following questions were asked:

1) How do you rate the over all service quality of the Fire Rescue EMS patient transport service?

Six (6) responses were received out of eight (8) mail outs. Six (6) responses were received on this question. Six (6) or one hundred percent (100%) replied the overall service quality was excellent. Zero

(0) or zero percent (0%) replied the overall service quality was good and zero (0) or zero percent (0%) percent replied the overall service quality needs improvement.



Comments:

I can only really speak for our service because it is the only one I really know and would rate it between good and excellent. Our call volume is such that we do not get burned out but more calls could result in increased competency.

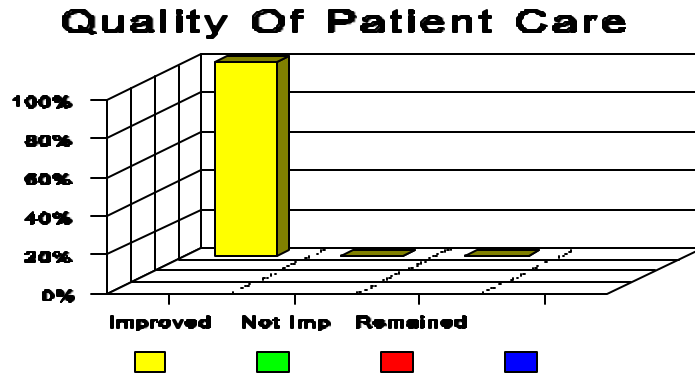
It was well planned & has met our expectations.

We no longer have to wait extended times to someone else to transport our patient. It has provided a higher level of service to our citizens.

Customer feedback.

2) Has the quality of patient care increased or improved?

Six (6) responses were received on this question. Six (6) or one hundred percent (100%) replied the quality of patient care had increased or improved. Zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied the quality of patient care had not increased or improved and zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied the quality of patient care had remained the same.



Comments:

Continued improvement and implementation of technologies such as oximetry and 12 lead have helped.

Our members enjoy starting patient care, continuing care through transport & delivering to the hospital.

The paramedic's are now handling patient care from beginning to end. This has resulted in improved care to our citizens.

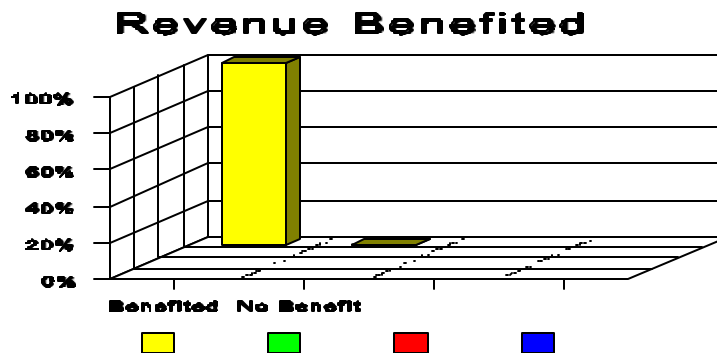
Better continuity of care and follow ups on patients are more routine practice.

Customer feedback.

3) Has the revenue received for the service benefited your agency in any fashion?

Six (6) or one hundred percent (100%) replied the revenue had benefited their agency in some fashion.

Zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied the revenue had not benefited their agency.



Comments:

Revenue has certainly helped to offset some operational costs. We do not bill city residents so revenue is limited.

Revenue received is put into an separate fund & all expenses for transport is taken out of that fund, thereby reducing some tax burden.

The money was used indirectly to purchase of a new ALS transport capable engine.

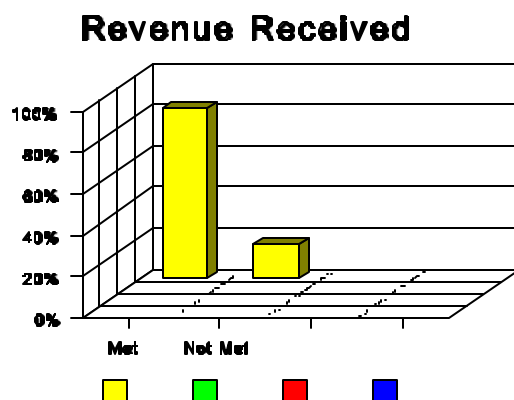
To the general fund.

Off set operating costs allowed us to deliver additional services without increasing budget.

4) Has the revenue received met or exceeded your expectations?

Five (5) or eight three percent (83%) replied the revenue had met or exceeded their expectations. One

(1) or seventeen percent (17%) replied the revenue had not met or exceeded their expectations.



Comments:

Revenue has been almost precisely as forecasted.

Exceeded. Our overall collections are above 68%.

We closed out last year with a 73% collection rate higher than any city around us and higher than the national average.

Percentage is low, but collections are improving.

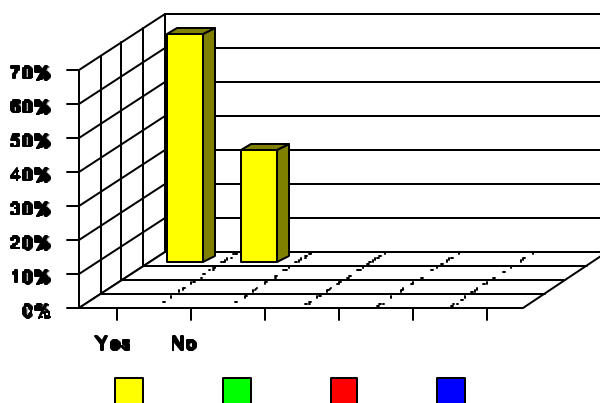
Call load and revenue collection above what was anticipated. Call load above 17%.

Revenue above 10%.

5) Do you evaluate customer satisfaction with the service with the use of survey cards or some other form of measurement?

Four (4) or sixty seven percent (67%) replied they do measure customer satisfaction with the use of survey cards or some other form of measurement. Two (2) or thirty three percent (33%) replied they do not measure customer satisfaction with the use of survey cards or some form of measurement.

Use Of Customer Surveys



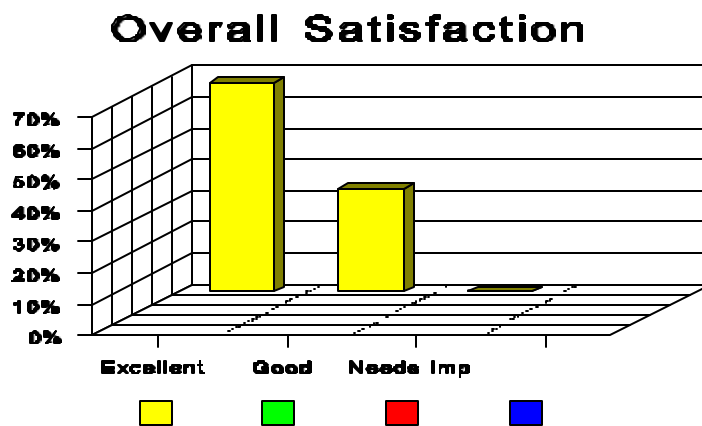
Comments:

We use a survey letter which we send to a target population each quarter.
We are currently looking at different methods.
Our crews hand out a survey card on every call. These cards are mailed back to our dept.
Personal calls to patient.
Survey cards returned postage paid.

6) What is the overall customer satisfaction with the Fire Rescue EMS patient transport service?

Four (4) or sixty seven percent (67%) replied the overall customer satisfaction with the Fire Rescue EMS patient transport service was excellent. Two (2) or thirty three percent (33%) replied the overall customer satisfaction with the Fire Rescue EMS patient transport service was good and zero (0)

or zero percent (0%) replied the service needs improvement.



Comments:

Generally our comments are good to excellent but naturally sometimes customer expectations are not met. For non residents, complaints generally center around charges. Rarely a patient care issue is identified and these are treated with highest priority. We have received good comments from our citizens. Very few complaints. Main complaints: billing. We have only received 1 complaint since inception. Probably excellent, but no formal survey exist for evaluating. Feedback from customer surveys.

Survey Results Customer Survey Cards

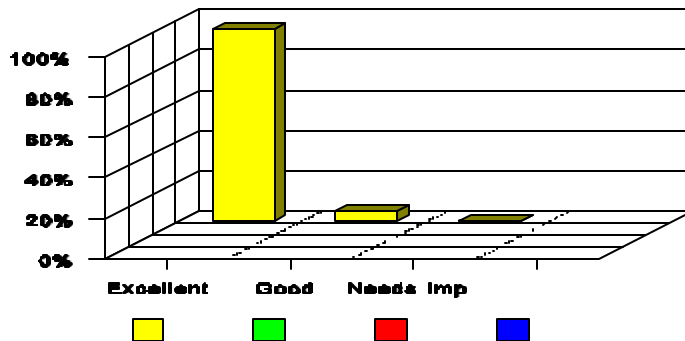
The external customers (patient) were surveyed in an effort to determine the customers satisfaction with the EMS patient transport service (Appendix Q). In addition to a scoring process, respondents were provided an opportunity to apply additional comments (Appendix R). The following questions were asked:

1) How would you rate the courteousness of our employees?

One hundred eighty five (185) responses were received. One hundred seventy six (176) or ninety five percent (95%) replied the courteousness of our employees was excellent. Nine (9) or five percent

(5%) replied the courteousness of our employees was good and zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied the courteousness of our employees needs improvement.

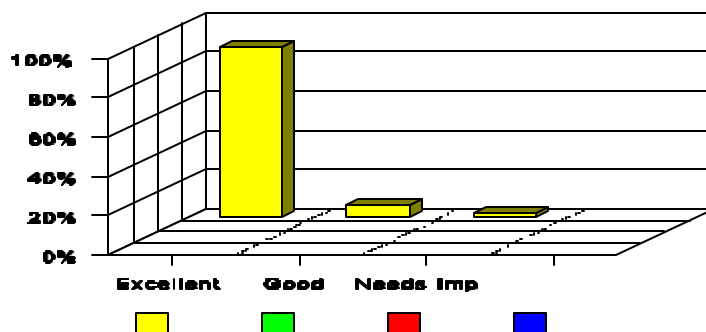
Courteousness Employee



2) How would you rank the courteousness of the 911 operator?

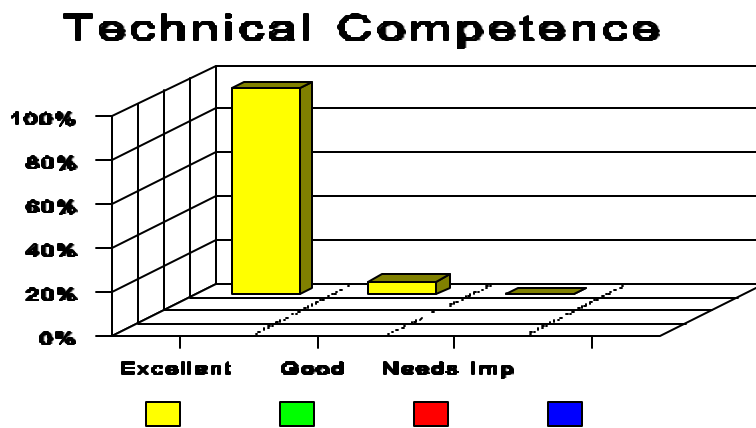
One hundred forty four (144) responses were received. One hundred twenty five (125) or eighty seven percent (87%) replied the courteousness of the 911 operator was excellent. Sixteen (16) or six percent (6%) replied the courteousness of the 911 operator was good and three (3) or two percent (2%) replied the courteousness of the 911 operator needs improvement.

Courteousness 911 Oper



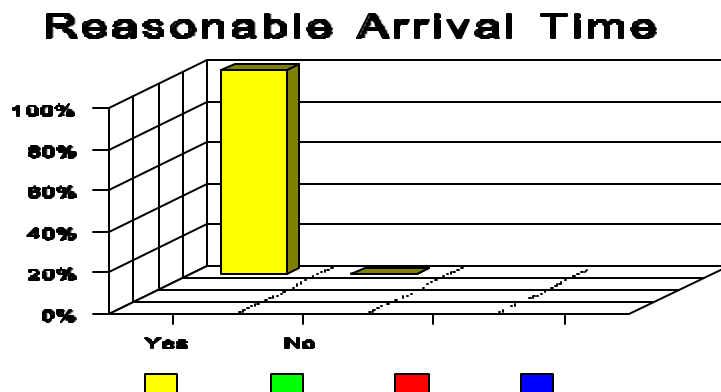
3) **How would you rank the technical competence of our crew?**

One hundred eight one (181) responses were received. One hundred seventy one (171) or ninety four percent (94%) replied the technical competence of our crews were excellent. Ten (10) or six percent (6%) replied the technical competence of our crews was good and zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied the technical competence of our crews needs improvement.



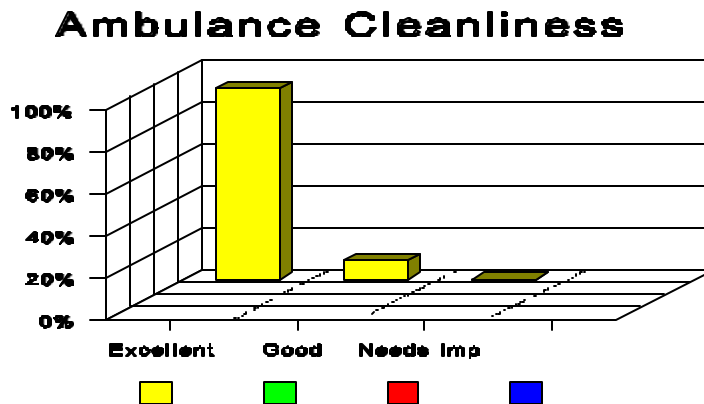
4) **Did the Fire Rescue unit arrive in a reasonable time?**

One hundred seventy five (175) responses were received. One hundred seventy five (175) or one hundred percent (100%) replied the fire rescue unit arrived in a reasonable time. Zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied the fire rescue unit did not arrive in a reasonable time.



5) How would you rate the cleanliness of our ambulance?

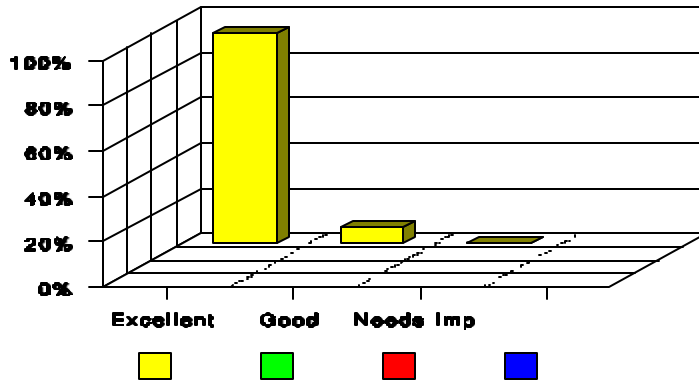
Ninety nine (99) responses were received. Ninety (90) or ninety one percent (91%) replied the cleanliness of our ambulance was excellent. Nine (9) or nine percent (9%) replied the cleanliness of our ambulance was good and zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied the cleanliness of our ambulance needs improvement.



6) Please rate your overall satisfaction with the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue & Emergency Management Department.

One hundred eight four (184) responses were received. One hundred seventy two (172) or ninety three percent (93%) replied their overall satisfaction with the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue & Emergency Management was excellent. Twelve (12) or seven percent (7%) replied their overall satisfaction with the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue & Emergency Management was good and zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied their overall satisfaction with the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue & Emergency Management needs improvement.

Overall Satisfaction



Comments:

Positive:

Thanks for everything.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Far exceedingly above the call of duty.
 Very courteous and very efficient. Excellent job.
 The best Fire Department in the State of Florida.
 Very pleased.
 We can see no way for improvement.
 These guys were wonderful. It's a privilege to live in Oviedo.
 You have one unit personnel who was exceptional. Do not recall his name. Thank you.
 Excellent service by well trained & courteous personnel.
 The crew was very comforting. Very nice.
 Rescue was called from OHS & he was transported to the hospital.
 Ratings based on short time observation.
 Each individual was extremely courteous & very professional.
 Professional.
 The best and friendliest crew I ever met.
 Courteous & polite employees.
 I did not go to the hospital, so didn't use ambulance.
 Well done-professional & friendly.
 Robert took very good care of me during the trip to the hospital! Thank you.
 Thank you all so much. When I get to feeling better I'll bring you guy's a pie.
 These men were great. I'm glad we have them to help us. Thanks to all of them!
 Excellent service & response on a Sun night.
 I thank the crew very much for excellent service.
 Many thanks for all your help & kindness.
 Outstanding service.

Thank you, you were very helpful.

Locked keys in car at McDonalds. Firemen stopped for dinner! They were courteous & friendly & helped immediately!

I was very impressed with the quick response time and the emergency treatment that was provided by a very professional Rescue Squad for my mother who was visiting from California! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Good response time. The crew handled themselves in a very professional manner.

If you need help most professional knowledge is all you want and get from the Oviedo Fire Rescue.

Thank you for coming so fast. I appreciate the service.

Superb response and service. Thank you!!!

Your staff was more than helpful and had such great attitudes! Thank you.

Extremely professional crew. Good job!

Super job, very courteous and professional.

The crew that came were kind & caring & patient & went to work immediately on my husband. He is coming out of his stroke very well.

Efficient and helpful, perfect gentlemen.

Great service.

Very caring.

Courteous and competent.

Four young men were all very compassionate & patient.

Two firefighters were great! Very helpful. Thank you.

Firemen were courteous & helpful & greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your wonderful help!

I greatly appreciate the service of emergency personnel.

I credit the rescue crew with saving my son's life. I will be forever grateful. They were in control, focused, extremely attentive to both my son and myself. Thank you!

This was a very unusual call. Dog had ball caught in throat but your people were very competent, courteous & compassionate. Thank you!!!

They've always made the kids feel relaxed.

Izzo & driver of fire truck were very courteous & made the best of the situation.

There is no need for improvement. You people all the best of the best.

I had fortunately, a non emergency visit, but appreciate their care & promptness. Thanks!

The whole crew was very professional, helpful and comforting! Thank you to them all!

Was at the Taste of Oviedo and got stung by a hornet and the fire rescue unit took care of me. They were so nice to me and took time to take care of my sting.

This is our 3rd experience with OFD-Please don't let Seminole County or Oviedo put this excellent service in any one else hands.

Laurie (Blonde Hair), Laurie (dark hair), Stephen and Rob were wonderful. Al the driver of the ambulance & Bill who kept a watch over Ed were great. For me it was a trying time. Many thanks to your concerned, compassionate, thoughtful crew.

Thanks for getting my baby out of the locked car! I'm glad you were nearby. I don't know what I would have done. That was a terrible moment & I'm so glad that she's ok! The guys

who rescued her were very nice & helpful.

This was a non emergency service involving smoke detectors. The service was prompt and complete and much appreciated.

First time we ever needed this service. The unit responded quickly & explained what they did & was going to do. I also rode to the hospital with them, polite, courteous, attentive to my uncle, even at the hospital found me to explain the next steps. Thank you guys for your help. He's doing ok-During his week stay at the hospital the Dr.s found he needed a 4 way by pass which he had Monday 3/3, unrelated to the problem.

It is competent and courteous people like that who make Oviedo a safe & nice place to live in.

I was very impressed with the genuine kindness of the men. They even wanted to clean up the mess. It was a non emergency situation and they couldn't do enough. Thank you.

I'm very thankful to be living in a community that offers such a professional & courteous service to all the residents. It's quite evident the Oviedo Fire Rescue Dept are fine young men who take pride in their profession. It shows! Thanks so much!

I have been very impressed with all the above. In their duty they have impressed & helped me very much. God bless!

Warm and compassionate.

A caring professional and competent group.

They were very kind & understanding under circumstances.

Thank you for all your help.

Took very good care of my wife. Thank you.

I flagged you folks down when I ran out of gas-Thanks for being so terrific!

As a new mother I really appreciate the information I was given and the understanding. I feel my baby is safe with the Oviedo Fire Dept. near by.

Both fire & Oviedo police were excellent & compassionate! Great guys! Thanks for responding to my aid. It was a relief to see you arrive.

Thank you for your help in a tough situation!

They came to our needs not once but twice in one week. A big thank you all.

I am very grateful to the fire dept. and my neighbor Ed.

I was impressed by the knowledge and the way they treated me in a personal way.

Thank you-Good job.

The crew had my truck opened in probably all of 4 minutes.

Excellent job.

Thanks for a great job done!

All very good! The young lady exceptional!

Made us at ease over cat up tree!

The gentlemen helped my husband & I clean up the mess after our kitchen fire. It was above & beyond their call of duty. We greatly appreciate it. Thanks guys.

The officers were prompt and courteous and I really appreciated their coming to pick up the old flares from the house.

The three firemen that called the station for us wonderful & caring people. Thank you!!

Very professional.

Response time was 5 minutes. Outstanding crew was very professional.
As we were locked out of our house, they were calming, reassuring & very competent.
I think its great, Oviedo has its own group. Thanks for the help.
Thanks to the fire rescue & emergency dept. you all did a great job. Thanks a lot!
Thank you for the invaluable service you provide our students and for the competent professional manner you exhibit!
Very nice & helpful crew. Thank you.
They were great understanding and caring.
They could not have been more courteous or competent.
The employees of the rescue emergency are to be commended for they were just wonderful to me & my husband.
They could not have been more helpful or thorough!
Have had to use twice and both times very satisfied.
The most recent event 9/27/96 my mother was stabilized by the time they reached the hospital. Thanks!
Thanks.
They were great.
They were great.
Just moved to this area (Oviedo) in July 1996. The crew that came out to help me with my husband were just great! Such a fine bunch of young men. So kind and caring. Will always be grateful to them. Love them all.
Mitch took great care of us. Thanks!
Couldn't of gotten any better service. Did a terrific job.
The fire rescue were very friendly & helpful.
First time I have ever used such a service. I was surprised by it's overall excellence. Thank you!
Those guys were great. They were very attentive and concerned. And they looked like they knew what they were doing.
We could not have asked for any better service from all. This is the 3rd time I used them and are excellent and very courteous.
Very good, courteous, professional.
I am thankful you are so close by.
Thanks for being there.
Oviedo is very lucky to have such fine paramedics.
Your service and care were both excellent.
Terrific job, minor injury never treated as major!
Excellent service.
Every time I need your service you are there for me and my family. Thanks.
Many thanks!

Negative:

The operator was very rude!

The 911 operator was very uncaring and felt like I put her out so much that I hung up on her!

Operator's careless attitude was much to be desired.

There was some confusion in locating the incident site. May be crew need to take tour of our area more often.

Every thing is excellent, but I concerned about the people don't know English. Is best will send someone speak Spanish for does don't know English of the last name is in Spanish or ask them if they do. I have about 4 person come from the call I do no one of does now Spanish. Thank for everything & god bless all of you.

Survey Results Medical Director

The medical director was surveyed in an effort to his overall satisfaction with the EMS patient transport service (Appendix M). In addition to scoring the medical director was provided an opportunity to apply additional comments (Appendix M). The following questions were asked:

- 1) How do you rate the overall service quality of the Fire Rescue EMS patient transport service?**

Excellent

Comments:

Short response time, good QA process, good quality care.

- 2) Has the quality of patient care increased or improved?**

Yes

Comments:

Paramedics assuming door to door care. Get good feedback from ER staff.

- 3) Has the patient care changed in any fashion by the in field personnel?**

Yes

Comments:

Better head to toe evaluations.

- 4) **As Medical Director, how do you evaluate quality assurance concerning the overall service quality and patient care provided by Fire Rescue personnel?**

Comments:

Run report review done by QA office @ EMS office. Exceptions/problems brought to my attention. Good local QA review by OFD QA personnel.

- 5) **Has the inception of Fire Rescue EMS patient transport improved the overall service quality to customers vs. the private ambulance provider?**

Yes

Comments:

Shortened door to door times, improved paramedic's skill levels, improved accountability.

Cost Comparison

Additionally a cost comparison was evaluated on the fee schedule for the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management versus the former private ambulance provider. The evaluation determined that a savings of nine dollars and fifty three cents (\$9.53) would occur per each transport for the base rate and a savings of twenty one cents (.21) per mile for the base mileage rate if the service was provided by the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management (Appendix I).

Citizen Complaints

An evaluation of citizen complaint forms during this review period also determined that not a single citizen complaint form was filed against the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management (Appendix F).

Response Times

An evaluation of response time of the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management versus the former private ambulance provider concluded that on an average the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management maintained an average response time of four minutes and twenty one seconds (4:21) versus the former private ambulance provider whom maintained an average response time of sixteen minutes and three seconds (16:03) (Appendix H).

Revenue

An evaluation of the revenue collected indicated that the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management in coordination with the billing agency had been successful in exceeding the expectations of revenue generated from the new EMS patient transport service (Appendix E). In fact the revenue collected exceeded the national average and the private ambulance industry average.

EMS Sub Group Proposal

As directed by the executive group, the EMS sub group prepared an evaluation and proposal reviewing many aspects of the EMS patient transport service (Appendix N). The conclusion of this report supported the initial theory that the local fire rescue agencies could provide a better quality EMS patient transport service versus the private ambulance provider. The report indicated that a single tier system was superior to two tier system that had been in operation for many years. The executive group members utilized this material when approaching their elected officials in securing a contract within each jurisdiction.

Legislation

The City of Oviedo elected officials adopted Resolution 525-95 establishing a fee schedule prior to awarding the EMS patient transport service to the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management (Appendix T). Schedule established base rates and other related rates to medical

transport and services rendered. This helped pave the way for the securing of the EMS patient transport service for the fire rescue department.

The Seminole County Board of County Commissioners provided the City of Oviedo Fire Department a Certificate Of Public Convenience And Necessity which was required for the City of Oviedo to provide EMS patient transport services (Appendix U). This obstacle was important due to it was a legislative requirement as specified by the state EMS office. This certificate was acquired prior to implementing the EMS patient transport service by the City of Oviedo.

DISCUSSION

The research project results demonstrate support for the original hypothesis that the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management could provide a superior EMS patient transport service versus the former private ambulance provider and that the overall service quality has been excellent as indicated from the external customers (patient), internal customers (employee), local EMS coordinators as well as the Medical Director. Furthermore, cost analysis indicate that a savings does occur to the insurance provider or patient when the patient is transported by the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management. Though the savings is minimal, the quality of service appears to make up for the difference in price.

The average responses times of the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management vs. the former private ambulance provider strongly lean in favor of the city as the provider for the EMS patient transport service. The average response time of the former private ambulance provider does not even meet the national standard and is considered unacceptable to the health and welfare of the patient.

The revenue collected by the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management indicates an above average collection rate. This further supports the hypothesis that this organization is managing the EMS patient transport service in an effective manner in which the city is receiving a return on its investment. The long range benefits for the past year have proven that by becoming a revenue generator, the organization has profited by the endorsement of several large scale capital projects from the elected city council members.

In conclusion, after evaluating many different areas of the EMS patient transport service for the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management, it is apparent that in this case the city is capable of providing a more cost effective, quality service to the citizens of this community versus

the former private ambulance provider. The degree of success has been given an overall excellent rating by the customers, employees, local EMS coordinators, and the Medical Director.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management should continue to monitor the EMS patient transport service with the use of customer survey cards, employee surveys, consultation with local EMS coordinators and the Medical Director. This has proven to be an effective tool in evaluating the status of such programs as indicated by the survey results.
- The organization should continue to insure its EMS patient transport service remains cost effective by monitoring fees of local service providers and maintaining a working relationship with insurance providers and the contracted billing agency.
- The organization should continue to provide for monthly EMS training of personnel and maintain working relationships with local fire rescue agencies for the same purpose.
- The organization should respond quickly to any receipt of customer complaints received by either customer survey cards or the citizen complaint process.
- The organization should continue to evaluate new technology as medical equipment becomes available for emergency scene personnel to provide the very best level of care that modern equipment may provide.
- The organization should continue to reward employees for outstanding performance with an annual awards banquet as well as the merit evaluation system.

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